

# News

United States  
Department  
of Labor



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THIS RELEASE IS EMBARGOED  
UNTIL: 7:30 A.M. (CT),  
Friday, February 20, 2004**

**JANUARY 2004 CONSUMER PRICE INDEXES  
FOR ENERGY, SHELTER, AND FOOD AT HOME  
HOUSTON-GALVESTON-BRAZORIA, TEXAS**

Energy costs climbed 4.1 percent in the Houston-Galveston-Brazoria metropolitan area during January, the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S Department of Labor reported today. The index for food at home also rose, up 2.2 percent, and shelter costs advanced 1.3 percent. Acting Regional Commissioner John Gordon noted that because these short-term changes are not adjusted for seasonal variation, consumers and businesses should be cautious in drawing conclusions about long-term retail price trends.

The 4.1-percent rise in energy costs followed three consecutive monthly declines. The current movement was almost entirely the result of sharply higher gasoline prices. The gasoline index registered a 9.2-percent jump in January after declining 10.7 percent in the last three months of 2003. This was the largest monthly increase since April 2002 when prices surged 17.3 percent. However, as a result of previous monthly declines, the gasoline index was up a more modest 4.9-percent over the year. The average price of a gallon of gasoline stood at \$1.552 in January. Electricity costs contributed slightly to the monthly energy advance as prices edged up 0.1 percent, while the index for utility piped gas fell 1.6 percent during January. On an annual basis, prices for electricity and piped gas rose sharply, up 21.5 percent and 41.6 percent, respectively. Combined with the smaller 12-month increase in gasoline costs, these movements placed the total energy index 14.8 percent above the year-ago level.

Grocery store prices rose 2.2 percent in January after increasing 1.4 percent in December. Higher costs for chicken, pork, fish and seafood, sugar and sweets, and tomatoes were the leading contributors. Lower prices for bread, eggs, and fresh fruits did little to offset the other gains. Grocery store costs rose 5.9 percent during the previous 12 months, a substantially higher increase than the 0.5-percent gain registered a year ago. The food at home index (CPI-U, 1982-84=100) stood at 179.8 in January, meaning that a typical basket of grocery items priced at \$100.00 in 1982-84 cost area consumers \$179.80 last month.

## Houston Energy, Shelter, & Food At Home Consumer Price Indexes – January 2004 (Cont'd)

The shelter index advanced 1.3 percent during the first month of 2004 after registering no change in December and falling 1.6 percent in November. Owners' equivalent rent of a primary residence (homeowners' costs) rose 1.0 percent while rent of a primary residence (renters' costs) was essentially unchanged (up 0.1 percent). Overall shelter costs rose more quickly during the month as a result of a sharper rise in hotel and motel charges. Over the year, homeowners' costs increased 3.9 percent and renters' costs were up 1.7 percent. The total shelter index was 2.6 percent higher than one year ago.